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The CASE of the *Clothiers, Weavers, Drapers, Mercers,* and other Dealers in the *Woollen Manufactures,* With Relation to the *AULNAGE.*

THE *Office* of *Aulnage* was conſtituted for the *Meaſuring, Weighing,* and *Searching* of Cloath; And to the intent that the Dealers therein might not be deceived, the *Seal* was put on to ſignifie the *Goodneſs thereof.* And the *Fee* of an Half penny for a whole and a Farthing for a half Cloath was given to the *Aulnager* upon that Conſideration.

27 Edw. 3.

The *Subſidy* of *Aulnage* was given to the Crown in conſideration of the Repealing a Statute made the 25 *Edw.* 3. which Statute was grievous to the Clothiers and Merchants: For that a Cloth by that Statute that wanted a Yard of the length appointed, was forfeited to the King.

27 Edw. 3.

This *Subſidy* was 4 *d.* for a whole Cloth, 2 *d.* for a half Cloth, *&c.* And the weight of ſuch Cloth was accounted to be 64 pounds.

5 & 6 Edw. 6. Cap. 6.

Since the Conſtituting of this *Office* there has been ſeveral *Statutes* made for the better Regulating of ſeveral ſorts of Cloth, by which *Statutes* the *Office* of the *Aulnager,* as to the *Meaſuring* and *Searching* of ſuch Cloth, is taken away, and put into other Hands, Yet notwithſtanding the *Aulnager* is ſtill continued to Collect the Duty due as aforeſaid. And the *Seal* is now put on for no other Reaſon than to ſignifie (as a Cockquet at the *Cuſtom-Houſe*) that the Duty is paid.

Since the granting this *Duty,* and eſtabliſhing this *Office,* there has been ſeveral new-invented Woollen Manufactures made, which for ſome conſiderable time paid no ſuch Duty, or were liable to the Inſpection or *Seal* of the *Aulnager*; whereupon about the latter end of the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth,* one *Delues* and *Fitzwilliams,* two of Her Majeſty's *Penſioners,* obtained a Patent upon theſe Suggeſtions, That *great deceit* was uſed in making theſe new-invented Manufactures, by reaſon no *Aulnager* was appointed to *Search* and *Seal* the ſame. And that a Duty in proportion to their length and weight ought to be paid for theſe new *Draperies* as well as for the old. This Patent being granted, occaſioned great *Controverſies and Diſputes,* and many *Law-Suits* were thereupon commenced, which continued for a long time.

Afterward in the Reign of King *James* the Firſt the then Duke of *Richmond* obtained the ſame Grant, and maintained the Controverſie, which continued many Years.

In the Year 1668, the late Duke of *Richmond* endeavoured to get the Duties ſetled by *Act of Parliament,* but his Bill was rejected.

The Dutcheſs of *Richmond* has now the Intereſt in the Patent for a term of 33 Years yet to come.

In the Year 1682. the Dutcheſs for a Fine of 9000 *l.* granted a Leaſe to Sir *John Eyles* and others for 21 Years, at the Yearly Rent of 3138 *l.*

Before theſe Farmers times this Patent was much complained againſt, by reaſon of many *Exactions* and *Oppreſſions* of former Farmers. And this Sir *John Eyles* and ſome others that are now concerned in the Farm, were the *greateſt Complainers* in thoſe times. And one great Reaſon for their taking the Farm, as was pretended, was for the remedying thereof.

But theſe *Farmers* conſulting their own Profit more than the Eaſe of the *Clothiers,* in ſome few Years after their taking the Farm, ſet up many new Pretences for the increaſing thereof; whereupon *great Controverſies aroſe,* ſome not willing to ſtand the Tryal and Charge of Law-Suits, ſubmitted; others withſtood: upon which many *Law-Suits* were commenced, ſome of which were determined in favour of the *Manufacturers,* but in others the *Farmers* prevailed, by which means they have greatly increaſed the Profits of their Farm.

The manner of Collecting this Duty is now very *Chargeable,* by reaſon of the many *Officers* employed therein; And in caſe no more or greater Sums were paid, then by Law are Due and Collected as the Patent directs, the Profit of the Farm would be very much leſſened thereby.

The manner of Collecting the Duty is *very grievous* to all the Dealers in the *Woollen Manufactures:* For,

That in many places, for the payment of a Half-Penny or Penny Duty (for which a Seal muſt be affixed) they are forced to carry their Goods to certain places at great diſtances from their Habitations, by which means their Goods are much damaged, their Inventions expoſed, their Markets oft-times loſt, which is much more grievous *than the payment of the Duty.*

That in other places they are forced to ſend for Seales *many Miles, and oftimes the* Aulnagers *not having Seales, the Clothes for want thereof been ſeized, and the Clothiers put to* great trouble and charge *to have them again.*

That they make frequent ſearches at the Dyers, Calenders, Preſſers, *&c. And if by any Accident a Seal be droped off as it will oft times happen, they then ſeize the Goods as wholly forfeited to the Crown.*

That they make frequent ſearch at Inns, *ſearch* Waggons *or* Horſe-packs *upon the Roade, Search* Faiers, Markets, Blackwel-Hall, Cuſtom-houſe-Keys, *and where elſe they pleaſe, ſeize and carry away what they find Unſealed*

That they enter into all Retailers Shops *and* Ware-Houſes, *Rifle their Goods, Diſturb their Markets, Seize and carry away either whole Pieces or Remnants, if Unſealed; this being ſuch an* extraordinary Oppreſſion, *the Shop-keepers are forced to yearly Compoſitions to be free from ſo great a Hazard and Trouble.*

That Retailers *of* Stockings *and* Hats, *have been forced to Compoſitions, although, neither Stockings or Hats were ever liable or pretended to be Sealed by the Paire or Hats.*

That for all Goods ſeized, the Owners thereof are forced to pay whatſoever the Farmers *or their* Agents *pleaſe to demand, or if they refuſe, then are their Goods returned into the Exchequer as wholy forfeited.*

That great quantities of Goods, have lately been Condemned in the Exchequer, for the Non-payment of the Duty which doth not amount to 5 s. per. Hundred Pounds-worth of the ſaid Goods.

This *Farm* being thus *Grievous,* has been the Occaſion of a great many *Complaints* in former Parliaments, but more eſpecially in the laſt and this Parliament in their ſeveral Seſſions; to whom divers Petitions have been preſented, complaining of great *Exactions and Abuſes.*

Theſe Petitions have been Examined, by ſeveral Committees, before whom the ſeveral Complaints were made more fully appear; Who thereupon were of Opinion, *That the Farmers had exacted more and greater Duties then by Law was due: And that the manner of Collecting the Duties, was very Oppreſſive and Burthenſome to the Subject, and a great Hindrance to the Trade of the Woollen Manufactures.*

In order to Remedy theſe *Grievances,* it was propoſed, That if a Duty not Exceeding what is now paid were Collected at the *Cuſtom-Houſe,* upon the Exportation of the ſeveral ſorts of Woollen Manufactures, it would bring in more Money then is now paid to the *Crown* or *Patentees.*

Upon theſe Propoſals, All Perſons who were endeavouring to have their Manufactures wholly diſcharged, deſiſted to Solicit a Bill for that End and Purpoſe, in hopes that by this method, not only they, but the whole Nation ſhould wholly be freed from the *Vexatious* way of Collecting, which was, and ſtill is, in many places much more grievous then the Duty it ſelf.

A *Bill* perſuant to the Propoſals, have been ſeveral times before the Houſe of Commons, and the laſt Seſſions it was ſent up to the Lords, where it was rejected, upon a ſuppoſition (as we are ſince informed) that the *Grievances* complained of might be Remedied, by having *the Duties Collected at the Fulling Mills,* &c. Whereupon a Committee of Lords were appointed to conſider thereof and bring in a Bill, but the Seſſions ſoon after ending, nothing further was done at that time

At the beginning of this Seſſions, a Committee of Lords were again appointed, who ſet and examined the Propoſals made by the *Aulnagers,* and heard the Reaſons offered againſt them, upon which their Lordſhips did not think fit to make any further proceeding thereupon.

A Bill is this Seſſions before the Parliament, and if the Duties in the Bill mentioned be Collected, as in and by the Bill is directed, it will bring in more Money Yearly then is now paid to the *Crown* or *Patentees,* as by Accompts abſtracted out of the *Cuſtom-houſe* Books have been, and is ready moſt plainly to be made appear.

And as a further Demonſtration, that the Duties will be ſufficient to anſwer the Intereſt of the *Crown* and *Patentees,* it is propoſed,

That in caſe the preſent Farmers *be not willing to receive the Duties as in the Bill mentioned, and thereupon continue to pay the Rent they now pay. There are Ten Men of* good and ſufficient Ability, *that are ready and willing* (notwithſtanding it is now a time of War, *and the Trade thereby much obſtructed*) *to take the Farm, and will advance by way of fine, the Summ of* 5500 l. *for the remainder of their Term, which is reckoned to be about Eleven Years; and will alſo Covenant to pay the ſame yearly Rent of* 3138 l. *for the ſaid Eleven Years, and deſires only the Paſſing of this Bill, and to be enabled to receive the benefit thereof during the ſaid Term.*

The CASE
Of the CLOTHIERS
and others Dealers in the Woollen Manufactures, with relation to the AULNAGE.

To be heard at the Bar of the Houſe of Lords, on *Wedneſday* the 27th of *January*.